

made uniform. *Cultural Encounters* is recommended to literary scholars and the general reader alike for the strength of the individual essays.

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JACOB THAISEN
Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland

Shakespeare, Italy, and Intertextuality

MICHELE MARRAPODI (Ed.)

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There can be no doubt that if any country exerted an influence on English culture during the early modern period this was Italy. And it is quite obvious too that the current interest in intertextuality as the mechanism of such influence, triggered by the artistic practices of the postmodern age, has found its greatest wealth of material to explore in the cultural discourse of the Renaissance with Shakespeare's dramatic work at the centre. *Shakespeare, Italy, and Intertextuality*, an impressive collection of critical essays edited by Michele Marrapodi, is the latest thrust of this scholar in his continuous pursuit since the early 1990s. If we do not count the editor's own introduction and Keir Elam's thoughtful afterword, the book contains sixteen chapters written by an international team of respected critics and divided—somewhat tentatively, I cannot help feeling—into four groups under the rubrics: “Theory and Practice”, “Culture and Tradition”, “Text and Ideology” and “Stage and Spectacle”.

A very neat (though, as the editor himself is the first to admit, far from comprehensive) typology of the variety of categories we tend to subsume under *intertextuality* is helpfully offered right at the beginning by Robert S. Miola. It includes revision, translation, quotation, sources, conventions and configurations, genres and paralogues. As Professor Elam rightly notices, there has been in recent research a marked shift of interest towards the bottom of the above list, and the volume clearly illustrates this tendency, though, as it is to be expected, most of the contributions partake of more types than one.

The range of topics and approaches is indeed striking as it extends from Alessandro Serpieri's semiotic analysis of the various kinds of meaningful structural departure from Plutarch's account of Julius Caesar's life in Shakespeare's tragedy named after him to Georgio Melchiori's parallel between the collaborative writing for the English playhouses and the similar practices in the production of visual art by the Italian bottega during the Renaissance that can help us deal with the vexed problems of authorship in the study of Shakespeare's apocrypha.

It is the variety of interest rather than any homogeneity that makes the volume so stimulating. Keir Elam focuses on critical treatments of the importation of Italian fashions in English polemical writings and in the Bard's plays. Mario Domenichelli is

interested in the contrast between the heroic presentation of Hector's death in ancient and Italian literary sources and its radical deflation in *Troilus and Cressida* marking both a reassessment of chivalry and the end of the high-mimetic world of tragedy. *Measure for Measure* is considered by Michele Marrapodi as a counter-reformational deconstruction of the traditional ransom story influenced by Cinthio's novelle. In Jason Lawrence's study of this play and *Othello*, it is concluded that Shakespeare had recourse to both Italian sources and their English translations. Charlotte Pressler adds that the mediation of English novelistic adaptations of Italian dramatic precedents helped him overcome the aesthetic difference between the two national theatres. And on the basis of source study again, Fernando Cioni develops a hypothesis linking the two Shrew comedies as consecutive versions of the same play.

Another couple of essays, by Anthony G. Barthelemy and Pamela Allen Brown, consider the ambivalent political and economic relations between England and Venice during the Jacobean age and their reflection in, respectively, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*, the latter being treated as a satire rather than a heroic tragedy. Michael J. Redmond returns to *Measure for Measure* to contend that its lack of an Italian setting marks a departure from the handling of the familiar disguised-duke plots while its rich intertextuality creates an unstable generic construct. For Claudia Corti, *Julius Caesar* can be read as a fairly detailed allegory of Ficino's philosophy of man.

J. R. Mulryne discusses two central scenes in *Antony and Cleopatra* as representative of two traditions of public entertainment, one derived ultimately from Italian aristocratic pageantry and the other linked to the local vernacular theatre. The chess motif in *The Tempest*, Middleton's *A Game at Chess* and Greenaway's *Prospero's Books*, as well as in a number of—chiefly Italian—Renaissance paintings, is the topic of Jeffrey A. Netto's essay in intertextual citation across the arts. And allusions to Roman art and culture again are found to be significant in several Shakespearean plays by Francois Laroque.

Some unacknowledged debates between different views on similar matters between the essays make the volume all the more worth reading.

ALEXANDER SHURBANOV

University of Sofia

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Empire of Letters: Letter Manuals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1680–1820

EVE TAVOR BANNET

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Letter-writing manuals have been known in England since about 1200 A.D. and are still coming off the presses in the third millennium. Eve Tavor Bannet's book focuses

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